

OCTOBER 14, 1976

INTER-AMERICAN PRESS CONFERENCE

ANNCR: THE INTER-AMERICAN PRESS ASSOCIATION IS MEETING IN WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA, AND VOA NEWS ANALYST FRED GALVAN SENDS US THESE OBSERVATIONS FROM THERE.

VOICE: THE SETTING OF THIS ANNUAL MEETING OF THE INTER-AMERICAN PRESS ASSOCIATION IS PARTICULARLY APPROPRIATE, FOR WILLIAMSBURG IS ONE OF THE CRADLES OF U.S. INDEPENDENCE, AND ALONG THE STREETS THAT THE I.A.P.A. MEMBERS NOW CROSS, WALKED SUCH STAUNCH DEFENDERS OF THAT INDEPENDENCE AS JEFFERSON, MADISON, PATRICK HENRY AND OTHERS. AND THEY, LIKE THE NEWSPAPER MEN GATHERED HERE THIS WEEK WERE DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT HUMAN FREEDOM, INCLUDING FREEDOM OF THE PRESS.

THE MEETING IN COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG REFLECTS THE TRADITIONAL PREOCCUPATION OF THE INTER-AMERICAN PRESS ASSOCIATION WITH THE ISSUE OF FREEDOM OF THE PRESS IN THIS HEMISPHERE. IT IS ALSO CLOSELY LINKED TO THE FORTHCOMING MEETING IN NAIROBI, KENYA, OF UNESCO--THE U.N. EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION. THAT CONFERENCE, SCHEDULED TO OPEN OCTOBER TWENTY-FIFTH, HAS OVERSHADOWED THE PROCEEDING HERE IN WILLIAMSBURG. FOR THE PARTICIPANTS, ONE OF THE ITEMS ON THE NAIROBI AGENDA IS SEEN AS A DIRECT THREAT TO PRESS FREEDOM NOT ONLY IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD, BUT IN ASIA, AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST. SPOKESMEN FOR TWO MAJOR AMERICAN NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATIONS---THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF NEWSPAPER EDITORS, AND THE AMERICAN NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION-- MADE IT CLEAR THAT THEY SHARE THAT CONCERN.

THE THREAT, AS PERCEIVED HERE IN WILLIAMSBURG, STEMS FROM A PROPOSAL THAT WILL BE PUT TO THE NAIROBI MEETING CALLING

FOR A POOL OF GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED NEWS AGENCIES TO DISSEMINATE NEWS OF DEVELOPMENTS IN THE THIRD WORLD AMONG ITS MEMBERS AND TO THE NATIONS OF THE INDUSTRIALIZED WORLD.

AT THE HEART OF THE CONCERN REFLECTED HERE IS THE PROSPECT OF GOVERNMENTS IMPEDING OR PREVENTING NEWS COVERAGE BY THE GREAT WORLD NEWS AGENCIES. THE NON-ALIGNED NATIONS, AS THEY DID RECENTLY IN SRI LANKA AND EARLIER AT A SPECIAL UNESCO MEETING IN COSTA RICA, CONTEND THAT THE NEWS AGENCIES OFTEN DISTORT OR IGNORE POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS IN THEIR COUNTRIES.

OPPOSITIONS OF THE POOL PROPOSAL AGREED THIS IS THE CASE SOMETIMES, BUT THEY ARGUE THAT GOVERNMENT CONTROL OF NEWS INEVITABLY LEADS TO MORE DISTORTION AND EVENTUAL ISOLATION OF PEOPLE FROM EVENTS HAPPENING OUTSIDE THE BORDERS OF THEIR COUNTRIES. HOWEVER, THE ATTITUDE OF THOSE WHO OPPOSE THE SRI LANKA-UNESCO PLAN IS NOT ENTIRELY NEGATIVE, SEVERAL SPEAKERS HERE HAVE STATED THAT THE MORE NEWS AGENCIES, THE BETTER. THEY RECOGNIZE THAT ANYTHING THAT PROMOTES A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONCERNS OF THE DEVELOPING WORLD BY THE INDUSTRIALIZED NATIONS BENEFITS ALL OF THEM, AND IT IS IN THE SPIRIT OF COOPERATION AND VIGILANCE FOR THE INTEGRITY OF FREEDOM OF THE PRESS THAT THE INTER-AMERICAN PRESS ASSOCIATION WILL BE JOINING THE A-S-N-E, AND THE A-N-P-A, IN PRESENTING THEIR POSITION AT NAIROBI.

THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES ALEJANDRO ORFILLA TOLD THE I.A.P.A. GENERAL ASSEMBLY WEDNESDAY (OCTOBER 13) THAT THIS HEMISPHERE'S FREE SPIRIT CAN CONTRIBUTE POSITIVELY TO THE FREE FLOW OF INFORMATION. FOR THE TRUTH, AS VALID TODAY AS IT WAS IN THE DAYS OF JEFFERSON AND THE AMERICAN FOUNDING FATHERS, IS THAT NO COUNTRY CAN BE STRONG AND FREE IF IT DOES NOT HAVE A STRONG AND

FREE PRESS. THIS IS A MESSAGE THAT THE INTER-AMERICAN PRESS ASSOCIATION IS TRYING TO CONVEY TO THE COMING MEETING OF UNESCO IN NAIROBI.

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